



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

DOCTOR DIXON'S WORK IN SANITARY SCIENCE.

BY B. FRANKLIN ROYER, M.D.

Acting Commissioner of Health, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The foundation of SAMUEL GIBSON DIXON'S unprecedented accomplishments in sanitary science was laid the day he took up the study of law in the offices of his brother, Edwin Saunders Dixon; and the erection of the superstructure began with his matriculation in the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania. It was probably because of his scientific bent of mind and his interest in chemistry and in physiological processes, in good part brought about by a break in health and search for recovery in 1881, that he gave up law and studied medicine. So far as his intimate friends in the medical class of 1886 know, he did not, as a student, give any indication, either that he was especially qualifying for or anticipating a career in preventive medicine. While a student, however, he did show unusual interest in chemistry and in the scientific side of physiology and before the completion of his course he had received an appointment from the University Trustees as Assistant Demonstrator in Physiology, the main chair being so ably filled by the late Harrison Allen. Throughout his life Dr. Dixon repeatedly referred to this pleasant association and to the stimulation for research work given him by his early master in physiology.

The major Medical Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania during the years when Dr. Dixon was a student (1882-1886) included a number of intellectual giants. The Professors in 1885 and 1886 as listed in the annual catalogue of the School of Medicine were as follows:

- ALFRED STILLÉ, M.D., LL.D., Emeritus Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine.
- HARRISON ALLEN, M.D., Emeritus Professor of Physiology.
- JOSEPH LEIDY, M.D., LL.D., Professor of Anatomy.
- RICHARD A. F. PENROSE, M.D., LL.D., Professor of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children.
- D. HAYES AGNEW, M.D., LL.D., John Rea Barton Professor of Surgery and Professor of Clinical Surgery.
- WILLIAM PEPPER, M.D., LL.D., Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine and Professor of Clinical Medicine.
- WILLIAM GOODELL, M.D., Professor of Clinical Gynecology.
- JAMES TYSON, M.D., Professor of General Pathology and Morbid Anatomy.
- HORATIO C. WOOD, M.D., LL.D., Professor of Materia Medica, Pharmacy and General Therapeutics.
- THEODORE G. WORMLEY, M.D., LL.D., Professor of Chemistry and Toxicology.
- JOHN ASHHURST, M.D., Professor of Clinical Surgery.
- WILLIAM OSLER, M.D., Professor of Clinical Medicine.

The influence of such a remarkable group of America's greatest medical teachers undoubtedly molded the mind destined to chart so original a course along new public health lines later in life.

Graduating with honor in 1886 at the age of thirty-five years, the doctorate degree was given to a man broken in health, and in the early stage of what proved to be mild enteric fever. By special arrangement his final medical examinations were given prior to his sailing for Europe, the prostrating illness not being definitely diagnosed until Queenstown was reached. Here under the care of Dr. W. L. Townsend, in consultation with the celebrated Sir Lauder Brunton, and later joined by the master in therapeutics, the brilliant Dr. Horatio C. Wood, Dr. Dixon won the battle against what his physicians thought would be a fatal illness. Those of us who have been closely associated with Dr. Dixon's work in sanitary science have always felt that the influences of the kindly and helpful Townsend and the stimulation of the brilliant therapist Wood, together with the association and life friendship of the learned Sir Lauder Brunton, influenced the young medical mind to study the then infant branch of hygiene—a branch of medicine at that time receiving its greatest impetus on the continent of Europe, particularly in Germany.

After a prolonged holiday in Europe and complete restoration to health, Dr. Dixon returned to Philadelphia in 1888 and was made Professor of Hygiene in the Medical and Scientific Departments of the University of Pennsylvania, and later in the same medical school year was appointed Dean of the Auxiliary Department of Medicine. Dr. Dixon, while holding this Chair, established the first laboratory of hygiene in the University of Pennsylvania and one of the first on the American continent.

In 1889, several months' study in Europe, undertaken with a resolution to perfect himself to teach the science of bacteriology, brought him under the tutorship of Cruikshank, the celebrated bacteriologist in King's College, London, and gave opportunity for taking a special course in bacteriology under Professor Klein of the College of State Medicine in London. It was while a student under Klein that Dixon made a notable observation, one by which he will perhaps be best remembered as a scientific investigator.

As he sat on his stool in Klein's laboratory, looking through the microscope and carefully searching a well stained slide preparation made from a culture of tubercle bacilli, he made the observation that certain of these organisms were club shaped and others appar-

ently had little shoots or branches. Dr. Dixon was very fond of telling of the skepticism in the minds of the other students of this laboratory, and perhaps even in the thought of open minded Klein himself, when they were permitted to look at the branched forms in this microscopic field. Some said the organisms were lying across each other, or that the end of one bacillus projected against the side of another; but Klein said, "Dixon, if this branching is true, you have made a great scientific discovery." He repeated his work, he checked his technique, he wrote a splendid little paper and illustrated it with a drawing which he made himself, showing the new form. That little paper and that small illustration prepared by the youth in research work attracted the attention of the scientific world and fixed a reputation in science.

This brilliant observation in all probability led him into further research in tuberculosis, but in order to still better equip himself as a teacher of hygiene, he did not return to his Chair without having studied with the most noted hygienist of that time, Pettenkofer of Munich. It was in 1889, while studying in the Laboratory of Hygiene, Munich, so far as we know, that he undertook his first studies in purifying large water supplies and the purification of sewage.

On his return to Philadelphia, late in 1889, he was made Professor of Sanitary Engineering in the University of Pennsylvania, and in October, 1889, we find him publishing a paper on the Treatment of Sewage in London. An opportunity has not been had to review the notes of his lectures given during this school year, but those who had the privilege of listening to his instruction, and who are in a position to contrast this instruction with the practices established under his supervision in the State Department of Health of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, see worked out in practical detail what was then considered imaginative and by some medical men almost impracticable and visionary.

In 1890, Dr. Dixon gave up his association with the University of Pennsylvania to become Professor of Bacteriology and Microscopic Technology in the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, going there solely in the capacity of a scientific worker. Here he was stimulated by the great Leidy.

During his last college teaching year—to be exact, the 19th of October, 1889—the second event in the unusual career of this unusual man occurred. This date is an important one in the career of him to whom we pay tribute tonight. In the experimental

research work undertaken by Dr. Dixon he found that by introducing old cultures of tubercle bacilli into lower animals a certain degree of immunity was produced, and the publication in the *Medical News* of Philadelphia on the above date preceded by more than six months a similar announcement and publication of similar work—that of the celebrated Koch of Germany. Koch announced somewhat reluctantly that a substance could be produced that would prevent the growth of the tubercle bacillus in the human system.

Following Koch's announcement, Dr. Dixon, with authority from American scientific and medical institutions, visited Europe, interviewed Koch, Virchow, DuBois-Raymond, and many others. At this time he had the privilege of admission to Koch's own laboratory. Europe and America were seething with public interest in tuberculosis. Koch's work, as discoverer of the tubercle bacillus and his later work backed by governmental agencies controlling Germany's laboratories, resulted in robbing Dr. Dixon for a long time of that credit of being the first to produce immunity which should have been given him. In recent years American students of tuberculosis have given this credit to Dr. Dixon and to America.

During the latter part of 1890, while working in his laboratory in the Academy of Natural Sciences, Dr. Dixon developed a tubercle bacillus extract that produces in the lower animals and in human beings that same stimulation toward cure in certain types of the disease that has been found by Trudeau, and other students of pulmonary lesions, to be brought about by the various forms of tuberculin. Later, this same preparation was found by surgeons to be effective in the treatment of certain glandular and genito-urinary types of tuberculosis and ophthalmologists found it equally helpful in the treatment of ocular types.

Dr. Dixon's indefatigable energy and originality were no doubt responsible for his selection in 1892 as Executive Curator in the Academy of Natural Sciences, and it is perhaps here and as Curator, that he developed genius for ocular teaching. This experience as Curator, together with his training in hygiene, led to his appointment as a member of the Board of Public Education in 1898. During the greater part of the six year period in the Board of Public Education Dr. Dixon was Chairman of the Committee on Hygiene. It was during this time that the active campaign was conducted for furnishing public school children of the city of Philadelphia with pure drinking

water. The city water supply at this time was unfiltered, the domestic household supply usually being purified by boiling. Filters were installed. In 1902 the Committee on Hygiene began volunteer medical inspection of the Public School children in Philadelphia, the first place in Pennsylvania to undertake such work.

It was while working in his capacity on the Committee on Hygiene that the genius of the man of science stimulated the completion of plans and models (practically invented) for scientific construction of outlets from wash-basins, sinks, and bath-tubs. An illustrated bulletin by the Commissioner of Health as late as May, 1914, shows how actively his interest in such devices continued throughout his busy career as a public health administrator.

As early as 1890 in the annual oration on hygiene before the Pennsylvania State Medical Society in convention at Williamsport, Dr. Dixon gave evidence of public health foresight by visualizing the future work of a State Health organization. In this address, which was later in good part repeated before the State Board of Health of Pennsylvania on Friday evening, May 15, 1891, Dr. Dixon practically forecast the work of a great State Department of Health. Its development came fourteen years later. In that address Dr. Dixon was consistent with his work in later life in that he outlined ideal precautions for protection against tuberculosis, and even suggested a Cabinet Minister of Health to be as useful as a Cabinet Minister of Agriculture for essential national organization.

Dr. Dixon's foundations for administrative work in sanitary science were well and deeply laid in the twenty-two year interval between the time he gave up law to study medicine and during the period of his teaching and research work. When the invitation came to him from Governor Pennypacker in June, 1905, to organize the State Department of Health, provided for by the three Acts of the Legislature of that year, he came to the work with foundation training in science and big business such as no other man in America had. Dr. Dixon had nothing whatever to do with the drafting of the legislation or securing its adoption. In his pursuit of knowledge of preventive medicine, so far as is known, he had not done so with any thought of accepting an executive position such as was offered him by the Governor. The laws creating the Department were drafted by Dr. Charles B. Penrose and it was almost wholly due to the skill, patience and devotion of Dr. Penrose to a subject in which he had become intensely interested while serving as a member

of the Board of Health in Philadelphia that the laws were properly drafted and their approval secured.

In the selection of Dr. Dixon to be the first Commissioner of Health in Pennsylvania, Governor Pennypacker in his autobiography may be quoted:

"The session of the Legislature ended on the 13th day of April. A Department of Health had been created, to which had been given very great authority and power which extended to the person of the individual citizen and might even be regarded as an infringement of his personal liberty. The value and permanence of the legislation would depend upon the manner in which the department would be organized. It was at first suggested to me that it should be placed in charge of Dr....., but that thought I instantly dismissed. I then had an interview with Dr. Charles B. Penrose, who had been very much interested in the matter, and he named to me a gentleman connected with one of the schools in the Western part of the State. I had a talk with this gentleman, but was still not satisfied. Then Dr. Penrose told me he thought Dr. Samuel G. Dixon, President of the Academy of Natural Sciences, would be willing to undertake the task. That suggestion suited me exactly. Dixon consented and I made the appointment. Under his direction it has come to be accepted as the most important and efficient organization for this line of work in the United States. There is good ground for hope that many of the inflammatory diseases due to specific poisons, such as typhoid fever, smallpox, diphtheria and tuberculosis, may be in time stamped out of existence."

Dr. Dixon was commissioned by Governor Pennypacker on the 6th day of June, 1905, and from that day until the day of his death devoted the greater part of each hour that he was awake to the organization and administration of the State Department of Health. The organization was successful almost immediately for the reason that every new step taken by the Department was carefully thought out before being projected, and because the public were fully taken into the confidence of the Commissioner prior to his enforcing any new plan of procedure.

Knowing the common interpretation that the wielding of police authority extending to the person of an individual citizen for the purpose of protecting all might be regarded as an infringement of personal liberty, Dr. Dixon from the beginning tried to change this general acceptance of the public and to make Pennsylvanians see that in civilized life many primitive and individual liberties must be given up to insure the benefits to be had by public health protection. From the very beginning of the State Department of Health the central thought in its educational work was "how may we get close to the people, and how may we make them see public health problems from the viewpoint of benefits to be obtained." Dr. Dixon's preachment, "Pennsylvania's citizens want to be kept well and in good health and are willing to submit to inconveniences if we only show them what to do"—these and similar slogans reached re-

sponsive chords. Pennsylvania liked this new way of being taken into the confidence of an executive.

It is not possible to faithfully treat of Dr. Dixon's work in sanitary science without speaking in some detail of the great public health organization built by him during the last twelve and a half years of his life. It will likely stand as the greatest monument to his memory.

The law creating the Department of Health centralized the authority in the hands of a single executive, giving him greater power than was given to any other officer of the Commonwealth, save the Governor, and perhaps greater authority than is granted any similar official in America.

With all of this authority in the hands of a man known to be ruggedly honest and gentle as a woman, the public had no fear of usurpation of the unusual authority placed in his hands, and during all the period that he was Commissioner of Health many of the unusual powers that might be needed in case of great emergency were never even given trial.

The first organization undertaken was that of the Bureau of Vital Statistics. Under Dr. Dixon's supervision this bureau was so well planned that before it had been in operation a full year the Federal Census Office credited Pennsylvania with having a better organized agency for gathering vital statistics than any other State in the Union. This bureau consists of a central office under the supervision of the State Registrar and more than 1,100 Local Registrars—one for each civil unit in the State, each Local Registrar having a deputy.

The second division of the Department's organization taken up by Dr. Dixon was that of Medical Inspection. Before this division had been in operation a year it was found that all previous plans for public health organization in the civil sub-divisions known as second class townships were inoperative, and that in many of the small boroughs similar inaction was seen.

For the first two years the Division of Medical Inspection was largely engaged in handling epidemics too extensive for local health organizations to cope with, and in helping lame health organizations to form working bodies.

In 1907, however, all second class townships were formed into 720 sanitary districts, and it was suggested to the Legislature that the law providing for school boards to act as Boards of Health therein be repealed. The advice was followed and at once the

Department assumed entire executive supervision over public health matters in a population of more than two million souls.

In all of the countryside, as well as in small boroughs, details were worked out for handling quarantine just as it is done in our large cities. It is fair at this time to say that a great deal of the reduction in sickness from communicable diseases in our larger centers of population is due to establishing proper regulations in the unorganized country villages and on farmsteads, such points prior to that time often feeding infection through food supplies or by visits into the larger centers of population.

The third great division of the Department's organization taken up was that of Sanitary Engineering. One of the Acts upon which the Department is based provided for the prevention of pollution of streams, and Department measures had to be perfected for approving, according to the Act, the plans for all water works and sewage treatment plants. Studies had to be made looking toward the requiring of many cities to build sewage purification works so that municipalities down stream might not be continuously poisoned by filth entering from the neighboring city above.

The amount of work required to supervise and intelligently approve the hundreds of plans brought before the Commissioner in this period of time was in itself almost a full task for one well trained sanitarian. For every set of plans that came before the Commissioner of Health completed and safe for approval in all details, two sets of plans required rejection in some particular, and a goodly number during the early days of the Department required rejection in toto.

The Division of Laboratories was organized as soon as the other divisions were well planned, the organization being made with a threefold purpose in view:

First, to afford doctors in the Commonwealth remote from instruments of precision opportunity to study their cases in a scientific way and to apply modern methods of treatment.

Second, to properly check the operation of water filtration and sewage purification plants and to coördinate the engineering studies with end results.

Third, with the purpose of undertaking such research work as might be advisable.

Division of Distribution of Biological Products.—Early in the history of the Department plans were made for averting the need-less sacrifice of life to the ravages of diphtheria. The Attorney

General ruled that the appropriation items were so liberal in their wording that the purchasing of diphtheria antitoxin would be permissible. Stations were established in all populous centers in the Commonwealth and antitoxin was placed within the reach of all Pennsylvania doctors for use in treating the poor.

Divisions of Accounting and Purchasing and Supplies.—From the very beginning of the Department's organization up to the present time systematic keeping and auditing of accounts, and purchasing and distribution of supplies were carried out with precision creditable to a large business concern. Two divisions were devoted to this portion of the Department's business and work, thus giving the executives of the other divisions all of their time for essential public health details.

So firmly had the organization worked out in 1905 been established by 1907, that when the Legislature of that year came to fulfill the campaign pledges of both great political organizations to support an anti-tuberculosis campaign, they deliberately voted \$1,000,000 to the Department of Health to start the work. This was done so that the organization incident to the conducting of a chain of dispensaries and the building of tuberculosis sanatoria for the poor might be worked out along the same lines followed in the organization of the new Health Department. To properly undertake this new line of work, two new divisions were organized—one of Tuberculosis Sanatoria and the other of Dispensaries.

This tuberculosis work lay nearest Dr. Dixon's heart and into its organization he put the best that was in him. Twenty-three hundred free beds in three great sanatoria in the Pennsylvania mountains, and one hundred and fifteen dispensaries, each with its quota of physicians and nurses, followed.

The work of these various divisions was extended and broadened from time to time, each division taking on its new load as directed by the Commissioner. Year after year elapsed, Dr. Dixon being appointed by Governor after Governor, and from time to time the Legislature broadened and made heavier the load by providing additional lines of work and liberal funds for its execution.

In 1915 a Bureau of Housing was created. An organization had to be planned to direct work over the entire State with the exception of first class cities, working for the most part through local health organizations in boroughs, second and third class cities. The Bureau was planned to improve living conditions of the poor, and especially to improve sanitary conditions as affecting the lives and health of infants and children and of workers.

Division of Public Service.—A law enacted during the same session of the Legislature provided for the medical inspection of hotel and restaurant employés, and prohibited the use of the common towel and public drinking cup. An additional division had to be organized for handling this work. During the last months of Dr. Dixon's life three additional divisions were planned.

First, a Division for the control of the sale of narcotics, created by a special Act of 1917.

Second, a Division of Child Hygiene, planned and organized to meet the unusual conditions to which the lives of children would be subjected during the high tension period of the war.

Third, a Division for the Treatment of Venereal Diseases, planned not only with the hope of ameliorating suffering and protecting America's selective service men, but with the purpose of placing within reach of the poor those specifics which, when properly applied, might lessen the chances of visitation unto the second and third generations and salvage many lives that might otherwise be wrecked.

Throughout the twelve and a half year period the Commissioner of Health received from his Bureau and Division Chiefs, and through them from the field forces throughout the Commonwealth, information of vital importance to the public. The volume of such information arriving in the central office was enormous, and the subdivisions of the Commissioner's executive staff assisted him in coördinating, digesting, abstracting and reflecting back to the public all those essential details helpful in keeping the public fully informed as to results obtained in making them see that the promises held forth at the time of launching any new line of work were being kept.

The difficulties in the way of perfecting such an organization were not always easily overcome. The Governor, as well as each of his three successors, placed entire confidence in Dr. Dixon and gave him full liberty in organization and freedom from political interference. It is but fair to say that not a single important executive appointment was made to gratify political ambition or to satisfy political recommendation. It very often happened, later in the executive work of Dr. Dixon, that the prominent political leader, who felt hurt that his insistent recommendation could not be complied with, was big enough and broad enough to later come back to Dr. Dixon and say, "I felt at the time you refused my request that you were making a mistake in taking the attitude you did concerning the health organi-

zation. I am convinced, however, that you are right and am glad to tell you so."

During the time that has elapsed since the organization of the Department was fairly well launched in 1906 until the end of 1917, 2,640,000 birth certificates, 1,500,000 death certificates, and 840,000 marriage certificates have been received, catalogued, bound, filed and stored in fireproof vaults of the State Capitol, where they are available for all legal and statistical purposes.

Two hundred thousand persons have been quarantined in rural districts for the various communicable diseases, with subsequent sanitary cleansing and disinfection of premises, and breaking the continuous chain of infection leading from farmstead to town and city and back again to farm. One hundred and twenty thousand dairy farm inspections have been made, and 2,500,000 school children in fourth class district schools have been examined with recommendations to parent or guardian for correcting defects.

Two hundred and eighty-four plans for water works and sewage treatment plants have been filed, studied and approved. 2,274 decrees have been issued requiring the installation of sewage works and water works, and 150 separate pollutions have been removed from streams.

One hundred and seven thousand three hundred and sixty-three patients have been treated at the tuberculosis dispensaries. 1,250,348 visits have been made to the homes of these patients for the purpose of giving practical teaching and sanitary instruction. Nearly 30,000 poor patients have been treated and educated at the Department's tuberculosis sanatoria.

The amount of work done in the Division of Laboratories for physicians of the Commonwealth was enormous, more than 20,000 specimens being examined monthly and scientific reports made to the family doctor.

Since the distribution of antitoxin was begun in 1905 until the end of the last statistical year 300,000 packages of diphtheria antitoxin were distributed free to the poor, 2,000 persons have been immunized against tetanus; nearly 50,000 against smallpox; and large numbers of persons were immunized against typhoid fever.

During the twelve and three quarter years' period when Dr. Dixon was Commissioner of Health in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania there was appropriated to his Department and expended in the promotion of public health, including the treating of the tuberculous sick, more than twenty million dollars of State

funds, and yet no criticism of this expenditure has been uttered. During this period in his official capacity as Commissioner of Health, he superintended activities extending to every municipality in the Commonwealth. He exercised advisory and supervisory control over the many public health organizations in the State; always leading and setting an example in every line of public health work. These many smaller health organizations, recognizing Dr. Dixon as a central figure, and stimulated by his work, exerted themselves to their utmost. The resulting saving of life is shown by the fact that in the year 1906 when the State Health Department was reorganized, the death rate in the State was 16 per thousand, and in 1917 it had declined to 14.7. This indicates a saving of 120,266 lives in the Commonwealth.

As a fitting stamp of approval of the sanitary work of Dr. Dixon, the Pennsylvania State Medical Society, after eleven years of enforcing police law (and sometimes in a drastic way against medical men), elected him to its highest office. He passed away while serving as President of the Society. His death was mourned most sincerely. The editorial notices written after Dr. Dixon's death were most unusual and show how he had inspired the confidence of the people.

DR. CONKLIN.—The addresses to which we have just listened have revealed to us a man of unusual ability and achievements, one who succeeded not merely in one profession but in several, and who has left upon his city, State and nation an enduring impression. “*Si monumentum quaeris, circumspice.*” He died too soon, in the thick of work, in the midst of public service. Now he rests from his labors and his works do follow him. Peace to his ashes, honor to his memory.